



General Training On Methodologies For  
Geological Disposal in North America  
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## Interactions With the Public-Lessons Learned

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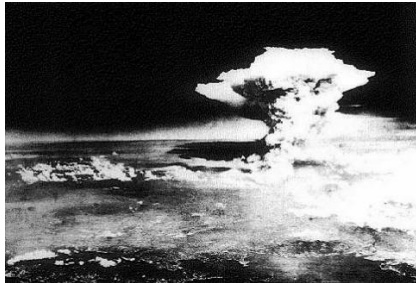
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### Public Acceptance for Nuclear Programs is difficult to Obtain



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### Is Social Acceptance Necessary?

- In Totalitarian Societies, the Public does not matter
- In Democratic Societies, Successful Waste Management Programs must maintain sufficient Public Acceptance, or at least Public Tolerance, or perish

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## Science and Technology is Necessary, but Insufficient for a Successful Waste Management Program

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## Waste Management Organizations Must Obtain and Maintain General Societal Support or at Least Acceptance/Tolerance

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## Programs Must Be Able to Successfully Interact with the General Public To Deal With Public Concerns

- Anti-Nuclear Opposition Will Happen  
-Often Externally Driven
- NIMBY Will Happen
- Political Challengers Will use the issue for Political Gain

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## Waste Management Organizations are Easy Targets

- Government or Nuclear Industry Related Organizations
- Not easily understood by the Public
  - Risk & Consequences
  - Involuntary
  - Lack of personal control
- Easy target for fear and dread attacks
  - Nuclear Weapons
  - Nuclear Power Accidents
  - Nuclear health effects:
    - Cancer
    - Genetic Birth Defects

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## Successful Implementing Organizations Must:

- Understand Political/Public/Group Dynamics
- Manage Interfaces
  - Political/Legal
  - Public
  - National
  - Regional
  - Local
- Successfully Communicate & Accommodate Feedback
  - Political Structural Organizations
  - General Public
  - Special Interest Groups

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## Who Is The Public?

- **The Voters**
  - National
  - Regional
  - Local
- **The Special Interest Groups?**
  - NGOs Claim to Represent the Public
  - Often have social agenda beyond Waste
  - No solution is possible

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## Understanding Public Information Factors

- **Perceptions are Reality**
  - Degrees of knowledge/concerns
- **Whose Information is Heard by the Public?**
  - Implementing Organization?
  - Opposition?
- **How is Message Translated to the Public?**
  - Print Media
  - Radio & Television Media
- **Importance of "Opinion Leaders"**

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## Prepare for Social Interfaces

- **Recognize That External Public/Group Interfaces are Important**
  - Establish Internal Organizational Structure & Staff
  - Develop Messages that are accurate
  - Develop Messages that are understandable to the audience
  - Know when to just listen and when and how to respond
  - Be Dynamic and Appropriately Responsive
  - Train your personnel

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## Important External Resources

- **Trust and Confidence In Messenger is critical**
  - Organizational Credibility
    - National & International Academies
    - Academia
    - Industry
    - Government
    - NGOs
- **Independent Safety Officials are very important**
  - National
  - Regional (State)
  - Local

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### Public Communications Factors

- **Understand & Address Audience's Concerns**
  - Focus on their issues, not yours
- **Communication Style Is Important**
  - Talk at their level
  - Be credible & competent
  - Minimize Formal Presentations & Speeches
  - Show empathy & compassion : be human
  - Be fair and caring
- **Learn from successful politician's communication styles**

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### Public Communications Factors-Continued

- **Recognize Occupational & Gender Differences**
  - Nurses vs. Engineers
  - Hunters vs. Gathers
- **Expect your remarks to be recorded to be used against you later**
- **Expect "trap" questions**
- **Be aware of the people who are listening**

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### General Public Communications Tactics

- **Balance Societal Needs**
  - Intergenerational Ethics
  - Options & Trade Offs
- **Employ "Jiu Jitsu" techniques when possible**
  - Utilize their point to bring out another perspective
- **Cultivate and enlist support from allies**
- **Engage your opponents on their Turf at the right time**

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## General Public Communications Tactics-Continued

- **BENEFITS NOT COMPENSATION**

- Compensation maybe understood as payments for health damages and an admission of damage or impacts to the Community

- Benefits are payments to build strong local and regional communities that can be support the waste management facility.

- Not related to impacts or damages

- A good neighbor policy with mutual benefits:

- educated, safe & healthy workforce

- good transportation networks



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## An Interaction Approach-Covey

1. Be Proactive

2. Begin With End in Mind

3. Put first things first

4. Think Win-Win

5. Seek First to Understand, then be Understood

6. Create Alternative Solutions Together (Synergize)



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## Risk Communication-Don'ts\*

- Be judgmental
- Attack those with higher credibility
- Repeat negative statements
- Be flippant with humor
- Say "I know how you feel"
- Overreact to emotional outbursts
- Use acronyms or jargon
- Speculate about what you do not know

\*McDaniel Lambert



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### Risk Communication-Do's\*

- Empathize
- Put yourself in their position
- Assume a listening posture
- Be aware of non-verbal communication
- Maintain eye contact
- Use language your audience can understand
- Use personal pronouns
- Release information early
- Tell the truth
- Provide a way to follow up

\*McDaniel Lambert



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### What Not to Do:

#### Risk Communication and Nuclear Power

- Presumed that quantitative risk estimates determine attitudes toward technology
- Comparisons chosen to trivialize nuclear risks, e.g., "safer than riding a bicycle"
- Implicit argument: people are irrational to worry about small risks such as from nuclear power



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### What Not to Do:

#### Risk Communication and Nuclear Power

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- Public disagreements between industry and Nuclear Regulatory Commission brought competence of regulators into question
- Concern that plant would blow up like nuclear bomb not addressed because such accidents are physically impossible



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### Why is Radioactive Waste Disposal Difficult?

- Fear of cancer
- Mystique of radiation
- Linkage to nuclear power
- Perceived unfairness to nearby residents
- Non-health concerns, e.g., property values, institutional durability and integrity



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### It Could Be Worse!

- Operating experience of nuclear power plants has been excellent for the past decade
- Concerns with other energy sources are visible, e.g., CO<sub>2</sub>, imported oil and related international tensions
- Medical benefits of radiation-based technologies appreciated



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### Insights for Radioactive Waste Communications

1. When possible, make risks controllable, voluntary, and well-managed - Look for issues on which to give the community some control
- Emphasize independent oversight
  - Explain monitoring plans and monitoring requirements - Measurable concentrations are more controllable than invisible risks - understand the value of monitoring and openness about data
  - Emphasize benefits



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### Insights for Radioactive Waste Communications

2. Understand that the community expects to be protected and accept this responsibility
- Don't "trivialize" the risks; this indicates complacency
  - Don't expect hazardous substances to be "innocent until proven guilty"
  - Don't expect national benefits to justify local risks
  - Don't mix cancer and cost in the same sentence

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### Insights for Radioactive Waste Communications

3. Treat people's concerns with respect and compassion
- Fear of cancer and substances that might add to cancer risk is reasonable
  - Don't be defensive or have a closed mind to the possibility that not every contingency has been considered
  - Personalize your responses when appropriate

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### Insights for Radioactive Waste Communications

4. Protect your credibility
- Associate your position with that of more credible sources regarding risk
  - Don't send engineers to discuss medical issues (especially low dose radiation health risks) or M.D.s to discuss hydrogeology
  - Say "I don't know" when you don't, and follow up with information later

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### Insights for Radioactive Waste Communications

5. Don't make enemies out of potential allies
- Keep your workers informed about your risk issues and how you are managing them
  - Recognize that you and your regulators have a common interest in safety and in good relations with the community

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### Public Communications Scenarios

- Is it Safe?
- Can you guarantee safety?
- Why are you doing this?
- Why are you here?
- Who do you represent?
- What does it mean to me, my family, and community?
- Isn't it true that "XXXXX" can happen?

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